

UDOT to demolish American Fork bridge after accident

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AMERICAN FORK — It's a magnet for tall trucks.

Drivers who pass under the now-closed bridge just south of the 500 East exit in American Fork can see scrapes, scratches and dents where too-tall trucks have smashed and slammed into the low-clearance bridge.

And after a massive accident Thursday night in which a tall semitrailer hit the Sam White Bridge and lost its load, turning the freeway into a parking lot — Utah Department of Transportation officials have permanently closed the bridge and plan to demolish it within three months.

"Because of the hit last night, it's actually helping us prove our case that we need to demolish it right away," UDOT spokesman Adan Carillo said Friday. "It's gotten hit so many times, we don't feel it's going to be safe."

Plans originally called for the bridge's demise later this fall, but now it's on the chopping block as soon as a contractor can be approved and nearby businesses, residents and city officials can be consulted.

The only catch is that once the bridge is down, nothing's going back up until 2010, during the massive I-15 reconstruction project in Utah County, Carillo said.

"Every time you take away an access to any area, there tends to be some opposition," Carillo said. "There's no way for people to get to their destination that's as easy ... but now that it's been hit so many times, we don't believe it's safe enough to keep carrying the load that goes over it every day."

The truck that slammed into the bridge Thursday night was too tall for the 14-foot-7-inch bridge, and several empty containers fell off its bed, blocking the freeway. Their fall gouged the road, smashed an SUV and injured two people. They were taken to a hospital and later released, said Utah Highway Patrol trooper Cameron Roden.

It took crews a few hours to completely open all lanes of traffic after they moved the SUV, the semitrailer and its containers and patched the damaged road, Roden said.

The driver, who was cited, was not originally scheduled to travel that direction but changed his plans and traveled under the bridge, Roden said.

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